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Effectiveness of Anti-Discrimination Policies: An Analysis of Housing Advertisements

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Abstract

This project investigates the efficacy of a proposed policy intervention related to housing discrimination. The student designed and executed a *python* script to collect information from rental housing advertisements in order to assess them for discriminatory language.

Looking through apartment rental listings, common information includes number of bedrooms and bathrooms, location, rental cost, and whether the landlord allows pets. It is not uncommon to see the phrase “No Section 8” as well. These advertisements are exhibiting source of income (SOI) discrimination, whereby a landlord does not rent to a prospective tenant because of where the tenant receives the money to pay rent, commonly through subsidies such as the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP, colloquially called “Section 8”). This form of discrimination is outlawed in a number of states, counties, and cities throughout the United States.

This project analyzes ten counties across the country – five with and five without SOI protections to answer the following question: (1) Does the enactment of a law change the rate at which landlords explicitly discriminate against HCVP participants?